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## ROLE OF SERVICES IN THE ECONOMIES OF SMALL TOWNS OF SILESIA REGION AND WIELKOPOLSKIE VOIVODEHIP

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**ABSTRACT.** The main aim of the article is to determine the role of services in the economies of small towns of Silesia and Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) regions. It will be achieved through the following steps: (A) characteristic of the set of towns under study, (B) determination of the share of services in their economies, and (C) description of their level of service development. The analysis rests on two criteria employed at each stage of the research: (a) that of location, which embraces the voivodships: Dolnośląskie, Opolskie, Śląskie (Silesia region) and Wielkopolskie voivodship and (b) that of size, with three classes of small towns distinguished: up to 5 thousand, 5–10 thousand, and 10–20 thousand population.

**KEY WORDS:** Poland, Silesia region, Wielkopolskie voivodship, small towns, services.

### INTRODUCTION

The change of the political conditions and the economic system in Poland in 1989 opened up new possibilities in the socio-economic development of towns that can be called post-industrial. Industry, expansive, technologically backward, and a traditional branch structure, stopped being a significant town-forming factor. The main manifestation of economic changes in Poland has been the dynamic development of the service sector termed tertiarization of economy. This notion denotes a growing role of services in the economy as expressed in both an increasing share of the tertiary sector in manufacturing, employment and

consumption structures, as well as a growing importance of services in industrial and agricultural production. Structural changes in the urban economy involve a reduction of productive (especially industrial) functions and an increase in service functions. Tertiarization of economy is observed in towns of all size classes, although it differs in dynamics.

Services perform an important role in the development of each town. In the case of small towns, which are usually located at some distance from major urban centres and agglomerations, they are of special significance. On the one hand, they satisfy basic local and higher-order, supra-local needs of their residents (education, health care, financial services), and on the other, they create jobs, especially for the local population.

An upsurge of interest in the development of services in small towns can be observed in many publications (Heffner, 2003; Heffner, Marszał, 2005; Heffner, Marszał, 2006). They include works on the small towns of Małopolskie voivodship (Kwiatek-Sołtys, 2004), Dolnośląskie voivodship (Szmytkie, 2008, 2009), Lubuskie voivodship (Kulczyńska, 2007), Łódzkie voivodship (Szafrńska, 2002), Opolskie voivodship (Rajchel, 2002), Śląskie voivodship (Zuzańska-Żyśko, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007), Świętokrzyskie voivodship (Pałka, 2007), Wielkopolskie voivodship (Konecka-Szydłowska, 2006, 2008; Konecka-Szydłowska, Weltrowska, 2006), and Middle Pomerania (Jażewicz, 2006, 2009).

The main aim of the article is to determine the role of services in the economies of small towns of Silesia region and Wielkopolska voivodship. It will be achieved through the following steps: (A) characterisation of the set of towns under study, (B) determination of the share of services in their economies, and (C) description of their level of service development. The analysis rests on two criteria employed at each stage of the research: (a) that of location, by voivodship, and (b) that of size, by three classes of small towns: with a population of up to 5 thousand, 5–10 thousand, and 10–20 thousand. The following hypotheses were set up:

- (A) There are differences in the general level of service development in small towns by voivodships.
- (B) There are differences in the level of service development by size class of small towns: the level of service development is higher in those with a population of 10–20 thousand.

The spatial scope of the study embraced 223 small towns of up to 20 thousand inhabitants located in four voivodships. In the region of Silesia (covers Dolnośląskie, Opolskie, and Śląskie voivodships) there are 71, 28, and 35 small towns, respectively, while in Wielkopolska voivodship there are 89 small towns.

The study rested on employment figures and the number of entities registered in the REGON system by section of the 2004 Polish Classification of Activities. The classification lists 11 sections of service activity, starting with section G,

‘Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods’ and ending with section Q, ‘Extra-territorial organizations and bodies’. The analysis spans the years 2005–2006.

### CHARACTERISTIC OF SMALL TOWNS IN SILESIA REGION AND WIELKOPOLSKA VOIVODSHIP

Although the study area embraces a mere four out of the sixteen voivodships, it accounts for almost one-third of small towns in Poland. Dolnośląskie voivodship is one of the most urbanized areas of the country. 71% of the voivodship’s population lives in towns, but as many as 70 out of the 91 Dolnośląskie voivodship towns are small units. The urban network structure is similar in the Opolskie voivodship, again dominated by small localities; there is only one town (Opole itself) that has more than 100 thousand residents. The voivodship’s urbanization level, at 52.3%, is lower than the national mean. Wielkopolskie voivodship, which has the greatest number of towns in the country’s regional pattern, features only two large cities with more than 100 thousand population (Poznań and Kalisz). Despite the region’s dense network of urban places, there is a relatively low proportion of the urban population: in 2006 it amounted to 56.7% against the national average of 61.3%. One of the reasons is the numerical dominance of small towns, with up to 20 thousand inhabitants. In 2006 there were 89 small towns in Wielkopolskie voivodship, i.e., 82% of all towns in the voivodship and 13% of all small towns in Poland. In turn, Śląskie voivodship has a substantial share of large and medium-sized towns, while small units number 35. It has the highest urbanization level in Poland, with as many as 79% of its inhabitants living in towns (Table 1).

Table 1. Urbanization level of voivodships in 2006

Voivodship	A	B	C	D
Dolnośląskie	91	70.9	71	10.6
Opolskie	35	52.3	28	4.2
Śląskie	71	79.0	35	5.2
Wielkopolskie	109	56.7	89	13.3
Poland	889	61.3	670	100.0

Explanation: A – total number of towns; B – urbanization level (proportion of urban population); C – number of small towns; D – proportion of small towns in Poland’s total number of small towns (%)

Source: Miasta w liczbach (Towns in numbers – in Polish), 2005–2006.  
Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2008

Predominant among the small towns of Silesia region and Wielkopolska voivodship, at 42.6%, are the smallest settlements with up to 5 thousand population, while those with 5–10 thousand constitute 34.1% and those with 10–20 thousand – 23.3%. However, the individual voivodships vary in this respect (Table 2). Dolnośląskie voivodship and Opolskie voivodship have a similar size structure of small towns in which those with 5–10 thousand population predominate: in Dolnośląskie voivodship they amount to 43.7% and in Opolskie voivodship 42.9%. Śląskie voivodship has equal proportions of the various size categories of small towns, while in Wielkopolskie voivodship the smallest towns with up to 5 thousand population definitely predominate, accounting for 56.2% of small towns.

Worth noting in the size structure of small towns is the wide disproportion between the smallest towns with about 1,500 population, e.g., Dolsk (1,479 inhabitants), Dobra (1,511) and Krzywiń (1,547) in Wielkopolskie voivodship, and those with close to 20,000 inhabitants, e.g., Bieruń (19,640) and Pyskowice (19,164) in Śląskie voivodship, Bogatynia (19,112) in Dolnośląskie voivodship, or Chodzież (19,652) in Wielkopolskie voivodship.

Table 2. Small towns of Silesia region and Wielkopolska voivodship in 2006

Size class of town	A			
	a	b	c	d
< 5 thousand	23	10	12	50
5–10 thousand	31	12	12	21
10–20 thousand	17	6	11	18
Total	71	28	35	89

Explanation: A – number of towns in voivodship; a – Dolnośląskie; b – Opolskie; c – Śląskie; d – Wielkopolskie

Source: Central Statistical Office, 2005, 2006

There are wide differences in the labour market of small towns. The set under study contains units with a very strong and very weak labour function. The largest group includes those in which the proportion of workers among their residents varies between 30% and 40%: 75 towns, or 34% of the total. In 39 towns, or 17% of the analysed set, this figure exceeds 50%, which means that at least every other resident has a job. In Wielkopolskie voivodship as many as 22 towns display a strong labour function. Here an outstanding town is Kleczew with a population of a mere 4,173, in which the proportion of workers soars to 144% owing to the local brown-coal mine. High figures (66–81%) are also characteristic of other small Wielkopolskie voivodship towns, e.g., Rydzyna, Wolsztyn, Puszczykowo,

Borek Wielkopolski, Stęszew, and Osieczna. In Dolnośląskie voivodship, there are 10 small towns with a favourable share of workers (51–65%), in Śląskie voivodship, 5 towns (52–66%), and in Opolskie voivodship, only 2 (55–56%). In as many as 33 towns (15%) the labour function is weak, up to 25%. This means that only one in four residents has a job.

### SHARE OF SERVICES IN THE ECONOMIES OF SMALL TOWNS

The process of tertiarization of economy that has been taking place in Poland since the 1990s can be observed in towns of all size classes, including small ones. The contribution of services to the economic structure of the analysed towns was determined by comparing 2006 employment figures in two types of activity: production (agricultural and industrial) and services (Table 3).

Table 3. Share of service employment in small towns of Silesia region (2005) and Wielkopolska voivodship (2006)

A	B				
	a	b	c	d	e
under 40.0	8	3	6	3	20
40.0 – 49.9	14	5	6	17	42
50.0 – 59.9	13	8	7	27	55
60.0 – 69.9	26	9	10	26	71
≥70.0	10	3	6	16	35
Total	71	28	35	89	223

Explanation: A – share of service employment in total employment; B – number of towns in voivodship; a – Dolnośląskie; b – Opolskie; c – Śląskie; d – Wielkopolskie; e – total

Source: Own compilation on the basis of data of the Katowice, Opole, Poznań and Wrocław Statistical Offices

In the set of 223 small towns under study, the service sector accounts for an average of 58.2% of total employment. This is an encouraging figure in view of the fact that no more than 20 years ago, i.e., at the start of the transformation period, most of the towns were dominated by the industrial sector.

The tertiarization process has been most dynamic in Wielkopolskie voivodship (Fig. 1). The analysis conducted shows that in a decided majority of the region's small towns, i.e., 69, the economy rests on services, while in the early 1990s this sector predominated in only 54 towns (Konecka-Szydłowska, 2006, 2008). There has also been an increase in the number of towns in which the proportion

of service employment is very high, in excess of 60%, while the mean figure is 59.4%. This growth is indicative of the increasingly important role of services in the economies of the voivodship's small towns. The unit with the lowest share of service employment is Kleczew (12.7%). Here the economy rests on the extraction of brown coal. Among the Wielkopolskie voivodship towns with the highest proportion (over 80%) of service employment are the smallest units with a population of up to 5 thousand, e.g., Dąbie (85.2%), Margonin (85.2%), Ślesin (84.4%), and Krzywiń (81.9%).

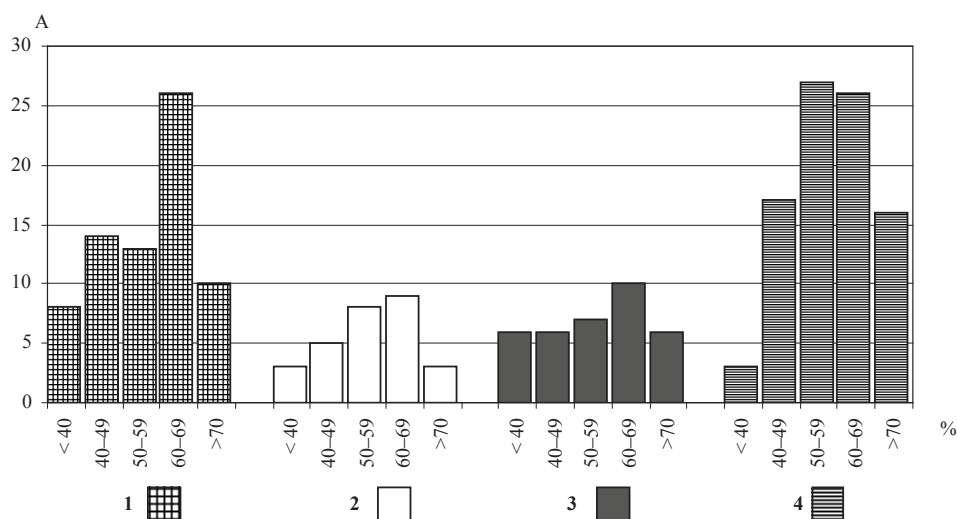


Fig. 1. Share of service employment in small towns by voivodships (Wielkopolskie, 2006; other voivodships, 2005)

Explanation: 1 – Dolnośląskie voivodship; 2 – Opolskie voivodship; 3 – Śląskie voivodship; 4 – Wielkopolskie voivodship; A – number of towns

Source: Own compilation

The process of tertiarization also takes place in the small towns of Dolnośląskie voivodship, where the mean share of service employment is 58.1%, and in most small towns (36 out of 71) the figure exceeds 60%. In particular, it is especially high in the health and tourist resorts situated in the Sudety Mountains, e.g., Karpacz (90.7%), Szklarska Poręba (83.4%), Łądek-Zdrój (82.0%), Polanica-Zdrój (81.1%), and Szczawno-Zdrój (77.5%), as well as in small towns performing the function of a local or district centre, e.g., Wleń (83.6%) and Lwówek Śląski (73.8%). In turn, the proportion of service employment is low in large industrial and mining units, e.g., Jelcz-Laskowice (29.9%), which is a major centre of the electromechanical industry, and Bogatynia (30.2%) with its brown-coal mine



and the Turów power plant, as well as small towns whose functional structure is dominated by a single branch of industry, e.g., Międzybórz (25.5%), a centre of the wood industry, Piława Górna (33.6%), a centre of the stone industry, or Jaworzyna Śląska (33.6%) with Karolina, its renowned porcelain plant (Fig. 2).

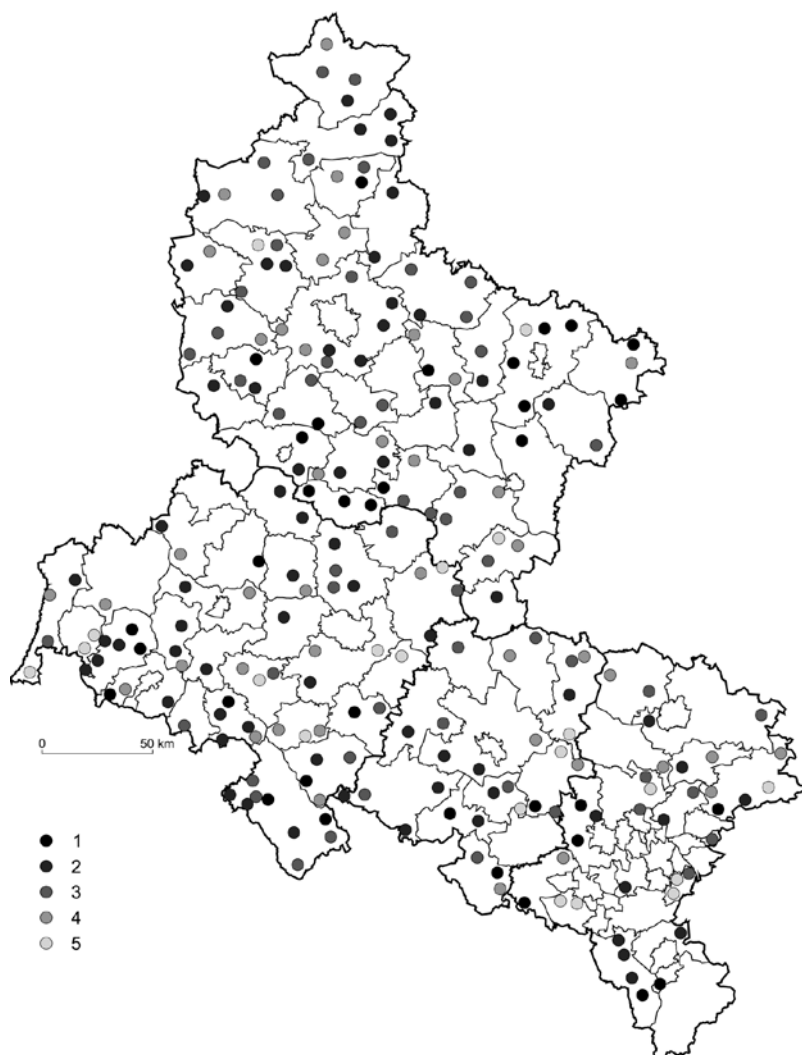


Fig. 2. Distribution of small towns by their share in service employment (Wielkopolskie, 2006; other voivodships, 2005)

Explanation: Share of service employment: 1 – 70.1–100.0%; 2 – 60.1–70.0%; 3 – 50.1–60.0%; 4 – 40.1–50.0%; 5 – 0.0–40.0%

Source: Own compilation



The situation is somewhat different in Opolskie voivodship, which also has a high mean share of service employment (57.1%), but it is only in 12 (out of 28) of its small towns that the figure exceeds 60%. It is the highest in those small towns that perform the function of local centres for typically agricultural regions, e.g., Leśnica (86.9%), Biała (82.9%), and Baborów (78.3%). A low share of service employment is recorded, in turn, in major industrial centres, e.g., Zdzeszowice (32.3%), where a large coking plant is located, and local industrial centres dominated by a single branch of industry, e.g., Dobrodzień (34.4%) and Kolonowskie (37.5%), which are centres of the furniture and wood industry.

The small towns of Śląskie voivodship also record advances in the tertiarization process, although their dynamics is lower than in the small towns of the other voivodships studied. The proportion of services in the urban economies varies here between 32% and 84%, with an average oscillating around 56%, i.e., lower than the mean for the entire set of 223 towns under analysis. In comparison with the late 1990s, there has been an increase of 6% (Zuzańska-Żyśko, 2006). This is an advantageous development, especially in view of the fact that in the past small Silesian towns were characterised by a domination of industry and underdevelopment of services. This continues to be a problem. There are still six towns where large state-owned or private plants are located and the share of service employment is 32–38% (Bieruń, Łędziny, Miasteczko Śląskie, Radlin, Pszów, and Pilica), although four of them have a good index of total employment (48–65%). At present 23 towns have a high (50% or higher) share of service employment. This shows that the foundation of their economies is the third sector offering a variety of service activities, very often including business services.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

The level of service development in small Silesian and Wielkopolska towns can be determined in terms of the total number of service entities in the individual small towns, and as the number of entities in section K of the 2004 Polish Classification of Activities (‘Real estate, renting and business activities’) per 1,000 population. Section K embraces modern services counted among so-called business environment services which rest heavily on information and knowledge, and which can therefore be indicative of the level of innovativeness of the economy of the small town involved (Table 4).

The greatest total number of service entities can be found in Wielkopolskie voivodship towns, at 80 per 1,000 population. Both smaller and larger towns are characterised by a high level of service development. The figure is similar in the Dolnośląskie voivodship towns with their 77 service entities per 1,000

population, although fewer such facilities than in Wielkopolskie voivodship are located in the smallest towns with up to 2 thousand population (Table 4). The same can be said of Opolskie voivodship. There are decidedly more service firms in towns with more than 10 thousand inhabitants and fewer in those with up to 5 thousand and smaller, the average being 71 service entities per 1,000 population. The lowest level of service development is registered in towns of Śląskie voivodship, where an average of 69 service entities can be found per 1,000 population. This is as many as 11 firms fewer per 1,000 population than in Wielkopolskie voivodship towns.

The other marker of the level of service development is the number of entities in section K per 1,000 population. In the study area this figure varies widely, from 6 to 22 entities. The highest indices of the modern economic entities of section K are characteristic of the small towns of Dolnośląskie voivodship, then Opolskie voivodship, Wielkopolskie voivodship and Śląskie voivodships (Table 4). It is worth noting that the number of entities of section K is proportional to the population figure, i.e., the higher the figure, the greater the number of such firms.

Table 4. Indices of the level of service development by voivodship and size class of towns

Voivodship	Size of towns	A	B	C	D	E
Śląskie (2005)	< 5 thousand	12	43.1	57.1	71.8	6.7
	5–10 thousand	12	29.1	58.5	67.0	10.0
	10–20 thousand	11	42.6	53.3	70.5	11.5
	mean	–	38.2	56.4	69.7	9.3
Dolnośląskie (2005)	< 5 thousand	23	32.6	55.0	66.5	16.0
	5–10 thousand	31	35.4	60.2	81.9	17.8
	10–20 thousand	17	41.2	58.2	84.9	21.9
	mean	–	35.9	58.1	77.6	18.2
Opolskie (2005)	< 5 thousand	10	33.7	61.8	59.3	11.2
	5–10 thousand	12	34.4	53.9	73.9	17.6
	10–20 thousand	6	41.6	55.8	86.1	22.3
	mean	–	35.7	57.1	71.3	16.3
Wielkopolskie (2006)	< 5 thousand	50	39.9	62.4	76.7	9.7
	5–10 thousand	21	42.0	55.4	80.3	16.3
	10–20 thousand	18	50.5	55.9	91.2	17.9
	mean	–	42.6	59.4	80.5	12.9

Explanation: A – number of towns; B – share of total employment in total population; C – share of service employment in total employment; D – service entities per 1,000 population; E – entities in section K per 1,000 population

Source: Own compilation

That is why those entities are mostly associated with larger towns, i.e., those with 10 to 20 thousand population. The index assumes the lowest values in the small towns of Śląskie voivodship, where section K contributes a mere 15% to the total number of service firms, as against 19% in Wielkopolskie voivodship and about 24% in the Dolnośląskie and Opolskie voivodships. As can be seen, although the service sector keeps developing, its level varies among the voivodships. A low share of entities in section K may be indicative of a lower level of economic development or of a greater significance of the industrial sector.

In sum, the best situation in terms of the labour market, service entities and modern services can be found in the largest towns, i.e., those with 10–20 thousand inhabitants. Their working population averages from 42% to 50% (Wielkopolskie voivodship), and they have from 70 to 91 service firms per 1,000 population, and from 11 (Śląskie voivodship) to 22 (Opolskie voivodship) firms of the modern sector K.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the course of the research procedure, the hypotheses advanced at the start were tested. The first, that there were differences among voivodships in the general level of service development in their small towns, was borne out, although the process of tertiarization of economy takes place in all of them. Wielkopolska towns have better developed services than those of the three remaining voivodships. Services perform the smallest role in small towns of Śląskie voivodship, which can be due to better development of services in medium-sized and larger towns, and to a greater significance of industry there. The small towns of Dolnośląskie and Opolskie voivodships also display service-oriented changes in their economies, especially tourist and health resorts in the Sudety Mountains and local towns serving rural areas in Opolskie voivodship. The average figures show services and the labour market to perform the strongest in the small towns of Wielkopolskie voivodship, and the poorest, in Śląskie voivodship. The small towns of Dolnośląskie and Opolskie voivodships attain an intermediate status.

Also corroborated was the other hypothesis, which assumed differences in the level of service development by size class of small towns and a higher level of service development in those with a population of 10–20 thousand. In the light of the indices employed, generally the highest level of service development is characteristic of the larger of small towns, since they display a higher mean proportion of workers in the total population, a higher number of service entities, and a better developed section K. Smaller towns, in turn, have a relatively high

proportion of service employment, which can be explained by their considerable distance from major centres and the fact that services are an important source of jobs there.

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